Ba 776 436 Legend has it that cowrie shells, widespread throughout Black Africa and used as money, come from the deep water where Faro keeps his fortune. Faro "sleeps on a bed of cowrie." Their mythical origin explains their role and both the economic and religious value attributed to them.

Ba 776 823 The black earth of the river banks, bogo fi, such as that found on the sea shore in sandy places, contains the strength of the spirit and is used in numerous rites. Smeared at the base of the interior walls of the huts, it symbolizes Faro's presence in the bosom of the family. It serves to decorate the headdress of the circumcised (1). Those who

1. See p. 233, Fig. 14.

live far from the Niger or from any source of water pray to it as if addressing Faro.

Ba 776 173 Some men occupy a privileged position in their relationship with the spirit. The first are the eight mythical ancestors, the eldest of whom is Koumabana. They received the word of the spirit, transmitted it to their descendants, explained before dying the new order of things, and instituted the cult.

At present they are still venerated as the prototypes of /507 the human being in his new environment. Along with immortality, man lost the heavenly food which, until then, had been sufficient to nourish him. The articulated limbs which were provided for him dedicated him to manual labor, the techniques of which were taught him little by little. On the other hand, in the spiritual domain a deep change also occurred. In primitive times, man lived an almost animal existence and was without any responsibility. His abandonment by the balanza brought him suffering and death, but with them, his consciousness, symbolized by Faro's "word," developed. Along with death, illness, sorrow, bad instincts and the hard daily labor, there appeared also man's feeling about his own person and his place in an ordered universe, governed by Faro, as opposed to primitive chaos.

The eight ancestors taught men to venerate Faro, to ask him for all they needed, and to thank him for all they received. Therefore their names are invoked in most prayers and the episodes of their lives are told to the young to whom their works are held up as an example.

Bo 776 773 Mention should also be made here of the special position held by the Bozo who were born to the mythical girl twins, daughters of Faro (2).

438 643 [648] the gold. But they, in turn, could in no case resell the gold to anybody other than the Fama. Aside from certain sacrificial uses and the making of jewels for the Fama's wives, gold served to ransom captives or to negotiate royal alliances.

435 [286] The price of the commodities was set by agreement between buyer and seller, except for cloth which had a fixed price, 100 cowrie shells per cubit in the Bamako region. As a matter of fact, the cotton gathered in the fields of the community was woven by captives who were not paid.

426 686 Loans were made without interest. Interest, korko, is still forbidden today. Loans are guaranteed by labor. The debtor who could not repay his debt on time and whose family head refused to pay it for him was seized by the Fama and held as security until such time as he had reimbursed his debt.

804 [436] Side by side with French units of measurement, the natives use their own for trade. Their measures of length: the cubit (elbow to tip of middle finger), the span, the foot, the length of both arms extended, the pace, the diare, and the kala . . . ; their measures of capacity: the sawel or mouré, the mud; their weights: the moutkhal, the catal, the large and little karoni, the wakie, the pellet of tali, of tomi, of bagana, of gelen. Cotton is weighed on rough scales whose pointer is a wooden rod and the balances large gourds hung by strings. For weights, large rocks, kulu, from 800 to 1,200 grams are used. Finally, the Bambara use French money almost exclusively: one franc of metropolitan France is equivalent to 0.50 francs C.F.A. Nevertheless, the use of cowrie shells is still frequent.

d. Banks

453 One bank of issue exists in French West Africa: the Bank of French West Africa. There are also private banks, the number of which has increased during the past few years.

The Bank of French West Africa, which has a branch at Bamako, carries out the following operations: [43]

1. discounts notes or bills of two or several signatures due in not more than 180 days;

2. creates, negotiates, or buys drafts;

comparisons with themselves, they have thought that certain individuals could also create understandings in the world of spirits, and thus become the spirits' equals and even command them and make them obey. They firmly believe that such is the case, and although there are many sorcerers, there are still more people who maneuver to attain this position. Possession of the occult sciences cannot be acquired by anyone who wishes, however. The diploma or certificate of competence, cannot be obtained without swallowing certain mixtures of ashes, intestines, and blood, and certain repulsive eyewashes, such as the rheum from dogs' eyes, must be slid under the eyelids in order to see the invisible beings. In addition, unless a man is initiated by his father or brother, he must expect to pay a goodly sum. This is an art that pays, and generously! Every aspirant must also have a good memory in order to engrave in his mind the formulas, gestures, and rites; only the intelligent succeed.

The competence of sorcerers is far from equal, nor do they proceed in an identical manner. Some read the future and discover secrets in the entrails of hens; others play with knuckle bones, pebbles, or cowrie shells (1) which they throw on the ground and count and

1. /Torn page/ white /shells/ used as money.

recount, or trace cabalistic signs on scattered ashes, moving the forefinger back and forth, as in a game of Goose /a game played with dice on a board/. Some work with a gourd three quarters full of water, which they set on a n'gô (a kind of napkin ring or bracelet made of braided roots) washed frequently in the blood of /sacrificial/ victims. This procedure is the least complicated. The gourd is tipped right and left, forward and backward, until it sits firmly on the n'gô and can no longer be moved without carrying the stand along. Then the operator need only flick it three times with the middle finger of the right hand while stating the petitions..., and the spirit will answer in a soft murmur which those present can hear, but which he alone understands. In a word, the /35/ good sorcerer stands out above the

755 The sorcerer consulted by a sick person explains to him the nature of his illness, tells him whether he is the victim of the hatred of a fetish in the service of some one malicious or envious, or of an enemy who is taking his own vengeance; or whether he is the victim of a gnâma, that fluid, that avenging force which every genie, every man, every animal, and both the living and dead possesses. In serious cases the patient is ordered to sacrifice many hens and quite often nanny goats and billy goats, but in cases that are mild or considered so, the remedies are more childish: should I mention a few?

To cure a headache, the sorcerer sticks the blade of his knife into the ground and places a cauri (1) at the base of the handle. After

1. A small white shell used as small change; at least 40 are needed to make a sou, or 0.05 francs.

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having spit on the cauri and the knife handle, he lays his hands on the patient, who gazes at him; he recites a formula, and, if the sick person is not cured when the prayer is finished, he must at least feel an appreciable improvement, and he always says he does: "A kaf'sa san, I feel better now.

The sovereign cure for leucoma, they say, is a pinch of powdered hyena dung placed in the eye. Because it is rare and costly, the remedy cannot be bought by all, and powder of cauri shells is substituted for it. This powder is obtained by rubbing a cauri on the stone for grinding millet, a very long process. In order to apply oneself to the task as the old women do, more than training is needed; it calls for patience, or rather, a passivity which cannot be defined.

In cases of ophthalmia and other eye diseases, the temples, the eyebrows, and the tops of the cheeks are greased with kana mixed with a little karite (2) butter. The kana is always enclosed in a bull's

2. Karite, or butter tree, Bassia parkii, genus of the Sapotaceae.

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Since all the Bambara could not be made to submit to shameful servitude, the Moslems were satisfied to impose a tax, to forbid public worship of the idols, and, with sheathed sword, sought to make converts by persuasion. Their caravans were quick to cover the country, preaching Islam in all places both favorable and unfavorable, but the mass of the people could not be approached. In order to give /131/ their beliefs a rational basis, they always did everything in the name of "Alla, " "Stamboul" (the Sultan of Constantinople), and "Makka (Mecca), and said to the conqueror: "All true belief comes from Mecca (Makka); it is the center of all religious life, so why do you fight so hard against our boli? They all come from Mecca. God has given you the formula: 'there is no Divinity other than God and Mohammed is His prophet'; for you He prescribes ablutions, Friday rest, etc.. Keep your formula and shout it! To us Bambara He has given the boli and bloody sacrifices, so why do you want to take from us our treasures that are hungry for blood?" I do not doubt that we owe our "legend" to the discussions which arose between the m'rabet (the marabout, or Moslem priest) and the gnâtigi, or bolitigi. Here it is as I so often heard it told by bold old men:

A group of youths who were devoting themselves to trade and following lady luck (ou toumbe kolo (1) gnini, "they were seeking cowrie shells"), one day took the road to the east. Over mountains and valleys the little band walked and walked for a long time, and then finally they reached the great, blue, salty water, the ocean, on the shores of which lies the holy city, Mecca (Makka) (2).

1. Kolo, "cowrie shells" (singular, kokẽ), small shells used as money.

2. Since the Moslems said that Mecca was located on the seacoast, and since the Bambara did not know Arabia, they believed it to be in this direction. In their minds the ocean does not have to be crossed to get there. Actually, this is the least of their worries.

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into our language and means a force,
a conscious force, that opposes
another conscious force which seeks
to harm us, and destroys it.

horns and hoofs of bulls filled with an ointment the composition of which it is very difficult to specify: blood, fat, and dried, crushed glow-worms are combined with iron powder, charcoal, and other /135/ ingredients. They are the Bambara equivalent of the "pink" pills which cure all ills, including baldness and ingrowing nails -- and that sums it up. The kana of which I speak are boli, and differ from the kana possessed by each powerful boli, which are no longer boli but parts of boli. Let us quickly admit that the word kana is as indefinite as the word foura, and means primarily "that which protects, preserves, and keeps us from harm."

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These little fetishes are not given festivals, and only their owners sprinkle them with blood and sacrifice to them. They cost little, and a sorcerer or the owner of a father foura or kana will make one for a modest sum varying between 5 kémés and a ba fla (5 kémés = 200 cowrie shells; ba fla = 1, 600 cowrie shells), which is from 5 sous to 2 francs.

Apart from the sorcerers, whose boli are innumerable, there is a whole group of people, the noumons (blacksmiths), the koulés (who dig canoes and mend broken gourds), the donzo (hunters), etc., who have such strong confidence in all these horrors that they would rather die of hunger than be deprived of them. The hunters all have some to make them active and alert. Before every hunt of the least importance there is a black pullet from each, and on the return another sacrifice is made, however unlucky the hunt may have been. The keeper of each fetish is usually the only one to pay respects to it. However, his brother hunters may give it a small offering, and it is understandable that they do so, since each fetish has its specialty. One is for deer, another for guinea fowl, a third for the big antelope (dadjé in Bambara and best known to Europeans under the name of koba, a word of the Peul language) or for the wild pig /facochère/, for the panther or the

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688 Tjo'lna, or Kégné, and the Nama of Misango, Kokodjan, or Guendo. The Djara of Tjikoumela is very popular in Bani country. A perjured Negro offers a gnénama fani, and the fani-n-kolo is costly. For the Komo it consists of two red roosters, two goats, a dog, two red kola nuts, a basket of millet (between 18 and 20 kilograms) and three times 8 kémé (the kémé is worth 80 cowrie shells) if the culprit is a man, or four times 8 kémé if it is a woman. For the Nama the price includes a gourd of honey, two gourds of karité butter, a red hen, two red kola nuts, a basket of millet, and 8 ba (the ba is worth 800 cowrie shells, or one franc), a kémé, and a débé (120 cowrie shells). In addition these are one to two kilograms of salt and a gourd of gnama-n-kou (malagueta pepper: amomum melegueta) for the sacrificer. For the Nia the cost is 12 ba, four chickens, two dogs, and two hens.

[804 436]

[804 436]

684 837 Adultery is frequent; it occurs daily and is the source of most of the disputes that arise. Some husbands are tolerant, however, and many are satisfied with 2 to 3 ba (between 1, 600 and 2, 400 cowrie shells, or 2 to 3 francs) and victims for a sacrifice to the family boli, such as a hen, a dog, a kid, or two kola nuts.

684 836 Like adultery, fornication is a serious offence because it violates the rights of third parties. It is less serious /163/ than adultery,

3. The Betrothal

584 583 I have often heard it said that a Bambara marriage is nothing less than a sale and a purchase: the woman goes to the highest bidder. I cannot share such an opinion. The suitor gives a bride price, I know, but this bride price is a present to the fiancée, and its entire value is returned to him. When the fiancée's father receives it, he treats himself to trousers, a cap with three points, a new blouse, a few jugs of d'lo, or millet beer, and many kola nuts; but when the wedding comes, it is the father who provides his child with loincloths, gourds, pottery, in fact her whole trousseau, and however slight his vanity -- and what Bambara is not vain! -- he will spend the bride price and even more.

When the suitor has been able to gather two to three kilograms of salt, a few bits of cloth for the little girl and her mother, and a portion of the bride price (1), which varies between 25 and 30 francs,

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1. The bride price is set at ba mougan ni tan, about 24, 000 cowrie shells. Each ba equals 10 kémé. The kémé is worth 80 cowrie shells, the ba 800 cowrie shells. In ordinary times a 5-franc piece is exchanged for ba dourou ni kémé dourou, or 4, 400 cowrie shells. The value of the cowries is subject to rise and fall, so that the 5-franc piece is sometimes worth 4, 400 cowrie shells; at other times the cowries drop and the 5-franc piece is worth ba woro ni kémé dourou, or 6 ba and 5 kémé, or ba wolonoula, 7 ba.

he pays his respects to the family through his intermediary, the fouroubolomа tigi, or guardian of the wedding gifts. The latter goes to the father-in-law, escorted /204/ by a few young girls who carry the fouroufen, or bride price, the gifts of cloth and salt, and a few jugs